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COMMUNICATIONS

"CAMOUFLAGE" AND "EATLESS DAYS" TWO HUNDRED YEARS AGO

The war in Europe has revived, and brought into common use, in all languages, the term "camouflage," denoting any contrivance to hide or disguise by one side to deceive and confuse the enemy. This term, if derived from the French *camouflet*, pronounced cam-u-flay, appears in the *International Encyclopedia* and is defined as: "A stinking compound in paper cases used in siege attacks to blow into the faces of sappers and miners to confuse them." The word must have been buried, for I find no mention of it in any other encyclopædia. The use of the term in a wider sense appears in *The Letters to Authors*, of Voltaire, dated 1730, where he savagely characterizes a rival writer of that period thus in rhyme:

Rousseau sujet au Camouflet,
Fut autrefois chasse dit-on.
Du theatre à coups de sifflet,
Du Paris à coups de baton.
Chez les Germains chacun fait comme,
Il c'est garanti du fagot.
Il a fait enfin le devot,
Ne pouvant faire l'honnête homme.

There is no set of Voltaire in English in Monroe, hence I translate without rhyme the French copy:

"Rousseau because of *camouflet*,
Was sometimes chased they say
From the theaters with storms of hisses,
From Paris with blows of clubs.
By Germans, each one well knows,
He is guaranteed the fagot.
He could not be an honest man,
Therefore became religious."

I find by the same author, under the title, *Misfortunes of Charles I*:

"Parliament ordered the public burning by the hangman of the tract written by James the First wherein he states that it is proper for people to have sport and amusements after divine service on Sundays. The same parliament names one day each week as a day

of fasting and ordered that the value of the food thus saved be paid to help defray the expense of the civil war then raging."

Yours truly,

JOHN LUCHSINGER.

Monroe, Wisconsin.

DANIEL WEBSTER'S WISCONSIN INVESTMENTS

At the time of the appearance of the communications relating to Webster's western investments in the first and second numbers of this magazine I chanced to see in the *Personal Recollections* of Robert S. Rantoul (Cambridge, Mass., Privately Printed, 1916) a reference to the same subject which seems worth calling to the attention of those interested in western history.

The author of the *Recollections* says that the early death of his father, Robert Rantoul, was in part due to the financial disaster which overtook him—he died at forty-seven—and proceeds to explain the circumstances. He had known that his father spent much time in the Middle West between 1845 and 1850 and that he had a high estimate of the economic and political possibilities of the upper Mississippi Valley; but it was not until long after his father's death that he learned something of the speculations and reverses in that region which hastened it.

The facts were as follows: Rantoul, Rufus Choate, and Caleb Cushing were trustees in a scheme, in which Webster, Cass, and a few others were also concerned, to get control of the headwaters of the Mississippi, saw the lumber, and float it down to markets in the rapidly growing cities and towns of the Middle West. Cass had shown that such a plan was practicable; but the associates knew, also, that there was mineral wealth in the region of Fort Snelling. Indian implements of that vicinity were inlaid with lead and copper. They had ill-timed, if not over-sanguine, hopes of great gain therefrom. The trustees managed everything and issued stock certificates in December, 1845. They had received a charter the preceding August as the St. Croix and Lake Superior Mineral Company. Nothing but trouble followed. After a dam had been built at St. Anthony's Falls their land titles were attacked and their logs were carried away by a spring flood. Cushing, who was to have been